



Quality Employment Solutions®

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Nebraska Department of Education

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➤ An Employer's Perspective

Godfather's Pizza Impacts Community

"We have 47 corporate stores in, I believe, eight states," remarked Jeanette Washington, Manager of Employee Relations and Diversity Initiatives for Godfather's Pizza. Such a large company has the potential to make a huge impact on its communities. Godfather's recognized this and decided to ensure that their impact would be a positive one. This conscientious company is currently developing a program that will increase diversity among their employees, and they've enlisted the services of Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) to reach their goal. "We wanted to make sure that the company reflects the communities it is serving," Jeanette said.

Voc Rehab's efforts to help those with disabilities find and retain employment made them a natural partner for Godfather's diversity program. They have established quality relationships with numerous employers all over the state. Whenever a Voc Rehab client is hired, their Employment Specialist continues working with the

individual to monitor progress and contacts the employer regularly to address any concerns. They are also available if employers or clients have questions or need help communicating with each other.

Michelle Hancock, a Voc Rehab Employment Specialist who is working with Jeanette is thrilled

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Jeanette Washington,
Human Resources
Representative for
Godfather's Pizza.



➤ An Employment Success Story

Light at the End of the Tunnel

"I was told I was never going to walk again," remembered Grand Island native Chuck Colclasure. Devastating news for anyone, but especially for a father whose life's work was in the physically demanding construction industry. Nevertheless, Chuck worked hard at rehabilitation. He was paralyzed from the neck down for four and a half months, but he was gradually winning his uphill battle. He entered rehab in March of 1998. Incredibly, by the end of the year he was walking with the help of crutches.

Chuck's journey however, had only just begun. It was time to plan for his future and he wouldn't have to do it alone. "Voc Rehab found me," he said. "Judy Vohland came and visited me after I got back from Craig Rehabilitation after breaking my neck. She set me up with some ideas and we got the ball bouncing from there." Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) is designed to help anyone facing challenges due to a disability. Their primary goal is to help people find employment and become self-sufficient. Judy, one of Chuck's Employment Specialists played a big part. "She said that Voc Rehab would assist in helping me get re-educated to help me get back into the job market."

After discussing Chuck's options, he decided to return to college at the University of Nebraska at Kearney with the support of Voc Rehab. It would

Marda's Strategy to Success

A New Chapter



Marda Sheen

"Voc Rehab is an organization that serves individuals who experience disabilities."

When Marda Sheen's parents made the decision to sell their business, she considered buying it. After all, she had worked in the family greenhouse and florist shop for years. While it was an attractive goal, Marda recognized that it simply wasn't plausible. "I had a car accident and have some injuries that limit what I can do with lifting, standing, etc," she revealed. So she made the wise decision to begin planning for her future.

"It's amazing all the things that are out there for you that you don't even realize," Marda said. She began to seek resources and organizations that might be able to help her find the right fit. At Nebraska Workforce Development, she met a woman

who referred her to Voc Rehab, so she followed up and made an appointment with the local office in Kearney. "I met with Cindy Powell and she has been wonderful," Marda said.

Voc Rehab is a program that serves individuals who experience disabilities. Their goal is to help people find employment and maintain it. They can offer solutions to many problems. Such as arranging transportation, improving employment skills, and simply finding ways to function comfortably in their homes and communities. Voc Rehab offers support in these areas and in countless others.

Marda wasn't ready to find a new job just yet, and that was perfectly all right. In the meantime, they focused

on improving her current work skills. Cindy also administered some assessments to determine areas that Marda would enjoy and where her skills could be fully utilized. She took a few classes to expand her knowledge of standard computer programs. Marda wanted to improve her general understanding of technology. Laughing, she commented, "I've run copiers before, but nothing this Star Wars!" She said, "I knew some things, but I've learned a lot more."

Cindy wanted to ensure that Marda had everything she needed to become successful, so she introduced her to Marcia Haynes-Wetjen, an Independent Living Specialist. "They came up with really important adaptations for

her to use in her home," Cindy said. Later, she remembers, "They ventured into other things that would be useful in her new occupation."

Finally, they worked to bring Marda's resume up to date. When she interviewed at Saint John's Good Samaritan Center, she was well prepared. "He hired me on the spot," Marda said. "After 29 years as a florist, I am a receptionist/administrative secretary at Saint John's... I love it." Cindy was thrilled for her. "Working in a nursing home is perfect because it combines her office skills and... her interest in working with people. She's got the best personality..." Cindy also added, "We try to help people aim in the direction of their values."

Marda's work is challenging and fun for her. "I'm learning a lot... Everyday I find myself amazed." She writes in the company newsletter and enjoys the people with whom she works. Marda's success is due to her hard work, patience, and never-failing optimism, but she doesn't forget those who helped her along the way. "I have recommended Voc Rehab to several other people," she said. Marda also remembers Cindy's role in her journey, "I believe her now to be a friend, so in addition to a job and a new career, I have another friend and I just treasure that... A whole other chapter in my life has opened."

• Light at the End of the Tunnel ...

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take stamina and motivation to overcome his physical obstacles, but he was up to the task. Sharon Maynard, another Employment Specialist involved in Chuck's case, is impressed with the school, "UNK is treating him beautifully," she said. Voc Rehab and Assistive Technology Partnership worked together to make his home accessible and his daily commute to class possible.

Chuck's previous knowledge of business contributed to his decision to major in business with an emphasis on marketing. Sharon admired his ability to juggle all aspects of his life. "He's a full-time dad...and full-time student," she said. "He is a delightful man to work with. He's going to go far."

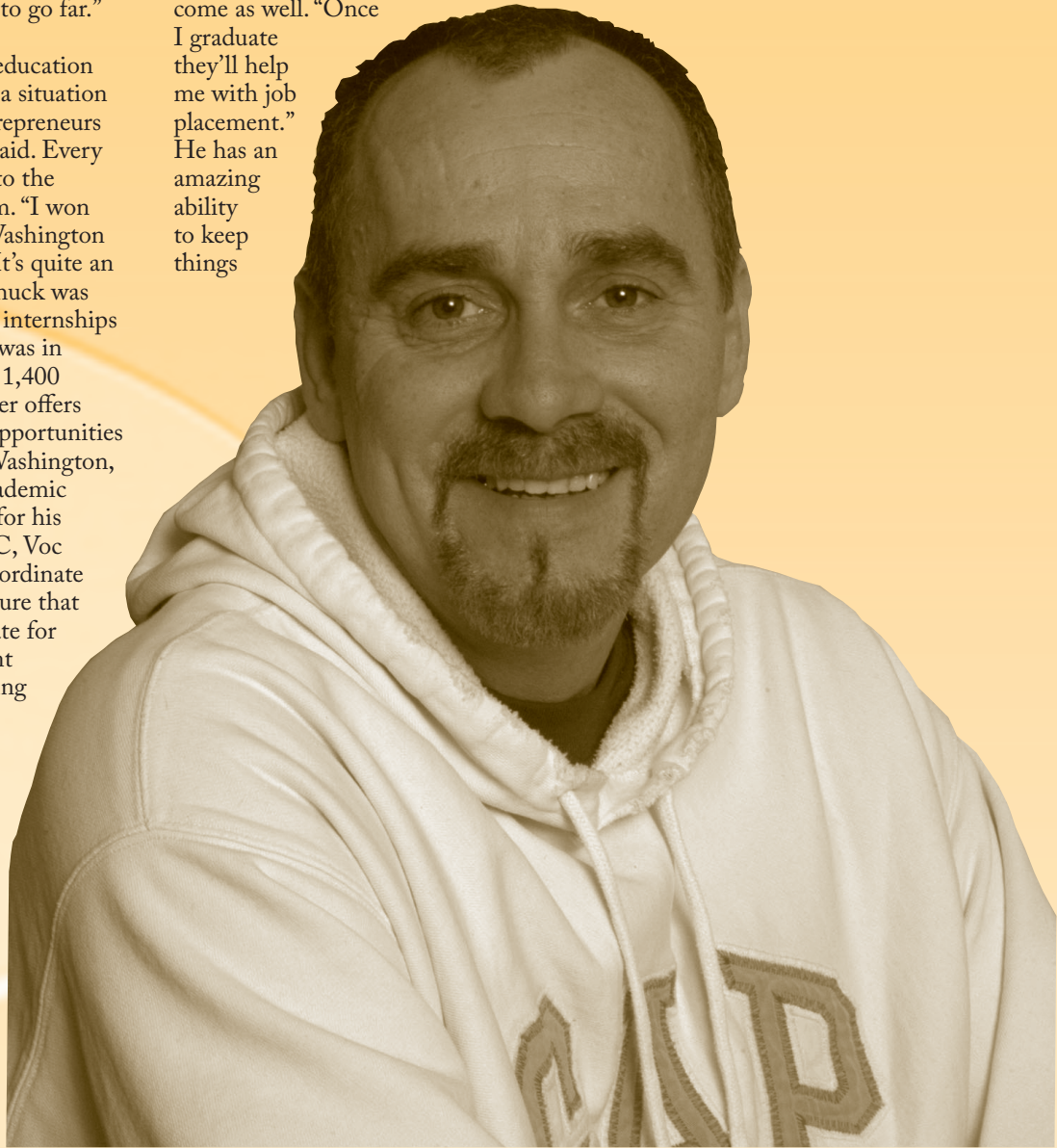
Chuck has clear post-education goals. "I'd like to be in a situation where I'm helping entrepreneurs get into business," he said. Every day brings him closer to the realization of his dream. "I won a scholarship to The Washington Center," he revealed. "It's quite an honor." Indeed it is. Chuck was awarded one of the 50 internships available this year. He was in competition with over 1,400 applications. The Center offers students challenging opportunities to work and learn in Washington, D.C. while earning academic credit. As he prepares for his trip to Washington DC, Voc Rehab is helping to coordinate transportation and ensure that his wardrobe is adequate for the formal environment where he will be working and learning.

"Voc Rehab has assisted me in so many ways," Chuck said. "It's all really overwhelming." Those who have worked with Chuck are thrilled for him. "My guess would be that he will be a very successful businessman when he's done," predicted Employment Specialist Dave Jelinek. Dave also mentioned that Chuck has brought his innate business sense to UNK and has become quite involved on campus. "He set up the golf tournament for UNK for a scholarship fund," he said "He was the guy that proposed it, actually got it set up, got the prizes... he set that whole tournament up."

Chuck knows he can count on Voc Rehab in the days to come as well. "Once I graduate they'll help me with job placement." He has an amazing ability to keep things

in perspective and seems to take each day as it comes. He knows the importance of perseverance. "I think Voc Rehab is by far the hugest contributor to me getting my life back. They stepped up and made me realize that life doesn't come to an end just because of an injury or something like this that takes you from a career that you have...and something like this doesn't prevent you from having another career," he said. To others facing hard times he reminds, "There is a light at the end of the tunnel."

"I think Voc Rehab is by far the hugest contributor to me getting my life back ..."



Chuck Colclasure



• Godfather's Pizza ...

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"Voc Rehab's efforts to help those with disabilities find and retain employment made them a natural partner for Godfather's diversity program."

about the Voc Rehab-Godfather's partnership. "It's just a great working experience," Michelle said. If the Voc Rehab job seeker is a good fit for Godfather's, she helps the client complete an application. She then forwards the information to Jeanette, who contacts local managers that might have appropriate openings. Michelle appreciates the experience her clients gain at Godfather's and said, "The promotability within the company is good and certainly the experience can take them other places as well." She believes that Godfather's has a similar respect for Voc Rehab. "I think they're finding that their experience with VR clients has been very positive."

Jeanette agrees, "Just like any other employee, you have to match the right person to the right job," and she notes that Voc Rehab clients are at least as, "...loyal and committed as any

other employee." Both Godfather's and Voc Rehab are working to strengthen the partnership. So far it has proven a wonderful resource for both parties. Godfather's gains quality employees and makes a contribution to the community and Voc Rehab gains a wonderful contact and knowledge of another reputable company where their clients can seek employment. Michelle commented the partnership is a "...rewarding relationship."

Each e-mail Jeanette sends includes a quote at the bottom of the page. It's a quote that she says perfectly describes the program philosophy: "I cannot control the wind, but I can adjust my sails." She explained further, saying, "...I think that embodies the collaboration that I have with Voc Rehab. People who, for whatever reason, are not able to do the things they've done previously... they can't control the wind, but

they are adjusting their sails to do what they now can do. And I think it is up to us as employers to be good community citizens."

The program is already enjoying success in Nebraska and in neighboring Iowa. It's not just at one location; it is a corporate mind-set. Everyone involved understands that the most important consideration is not reputation or money, but the people who stand to benefit. Jeanette stated eloquently and simply, "When they are successful, we'll be successful."

Quality Employment Solutions® is published by Vocational Rehabilitation, Nebraska Department of Education, to provide information for other Nebraskans working with people who have disabilities. For a free subscription, go to: <http://www.vocrehab.state.ne.us/subscribe.html> or contact our office toll free at: 1-877-637-3422. Direct inquiries can be made to: Frank C. Lloyd, Director, or Sandy Ham, Program Associate at 402-471-0941, 877-637-3422 or at www.vocrehab.state.ne.us.

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